

Conference Abstract

# Digitise This! Innovation in Digitisation Initiatives within Australasian Herbaria

Dhahara Ranatunga<sup>‡</sup>, Pina Milne<sup>§</sup>, Joanne Birch<sup>|</sup>

<sup>‡</sup> Auckland War Memorial Museum, Tamaki Paenga Hira, Auckland, New Zealand

<sup>§</sup> Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

<sup>|</sup> University of Melbourne Herbarium, Parkville, Australia

Corresponding author: Dhahara Ranatunga ([dranatunga@aucklandmuseum.com](mailto:dranatunga@aucklandmuseum.com)), Pina Milne ([pina.milne@rbg.vic.gov.au](mailto:pina.milne@rbg.vic.gov.au)), Joanne Birch ([joanne.birch@rbg.vic.gov.au](mailto:joanne.birch@rbg.vic.gov.au))

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## Abstract

Significant progress has been made in the last 10 years towards provision of digital data and images of the more than 8.0 million specimens in Australian and New Zealand herbaria. Initial investments of equipment, funding for salaries and development of protocols, led by the Journal Storage (JSTOR) Global Plants Initiative (GPI), with generous support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Atlas of Living Australia, provided the framework for the generation of digital images of type specimens. Council of Heads of Australasian Herbaria administered the project in Australia. Subsequent digitisation initiatives have reflected institutional priorities and resource allocations. The Managers of Australasian Herbaria (MAHC) group has served as a significant resource for exchange of curation expertise and development of standards for digitisation initiatives including provision of the best-practice guidelines for imaging of algae, bryophyte, fungi and lichen specimens.

Three initiatives underway in Australasian herbaria have built upon these initial investments in digitisation infrastructure to curate and share digital images in innovative ways. The projects include:

1. digitisation of cryptogram specimens at the Auckland War Memorial Museum Herbarium (AK);
2. generation of exemplar images (including leaves, fruits, seedlings etc.) to support VicFlora the online Flora of Victoria at the National Herbarium of Victoria (MEL); and
3. development of the infrastructure for delivery of high resolution images and collection data in an online data portal at the University of Melbourne Herbarium (MELU).

An overview of these projects enables consideration of the efficiencies gained by collaborative development and sharing of curation protocols among state and national institutions as a result of the diversity of expertise and resources that these collaborative initiatives potentially draw from. In each of these projects, standard workflows were optimised to meet the individual institutional requirements. The innovative approaches that were taken that suited the unique aspects of our diverse collections will be discussed. Finally, these projects provided insights into some challenges frequently encountered and potential solutions to the challenge of curating large numbers of digital images, including maintenance of accurate links between actual and digital collection objects, for large and small natural history collections.

## **Keywords**

Digitisation, Australasia, Herbaria, Collections

## **Presenting author**

Dhahara Ranatunga